

NEWSWEEK

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The De-Briefing

Process for the U.S.S.R's Defectors

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The Hotel Rex is a stodgy, third-rate establishment on Geneva's Avenue Wendt. Behind its dingy, yellow-stucco walls, clean but unluxurious rooms serve as home away from home for middle-class businessmen and second-string diplomats. Four weeks ago, ten Russians checked in at the Rex. They were in town for the disarmament conference, and hotel staffers remember them as a surly lot—all except for the guest in Room 207. Handsome Yuri I. Nosenko, 36, always had a smile and a cheery word for the maids, and given any opportunity would proudly show them the crayoned drawings of houses and animals that his two young children had sent him from home. "I'll be back with them soon," he would say. But the day before the guest in 207 was due to leave for Moscow, he tucked a bulging briefcase under his arm, walked jauntily out of the Hotel Rex, and never returned. Yuri I. Nosenko, trusted officer in the KGB, Russia's security police and counterintelligence service, had defected to the West.

The Russians first missed Nosenko when he failed to show for an afternoon session of the disarmament conference. When they found his briefcase was missing, the hunt was on.

Provocative Activity: Red agents scoured Geneva, and kept the airport and all border crossing points under tight surveillance. Only when it was obviously too late did the Russians call in the Swiss for help, and then chief Soviet disarmament delegate Semyon K. Tsarapkin had the effrontery to blame Swiss authorities for the defection. Despite his obvious anger, Tsarapkin seemed determined not to allow the affair to disrupt the tranquil atmosphere of the disarmament talks.

Even when the U.S. State Department openly admitted that Nosenko was in safe hands and had asked for asylum, Tsarapkin still refrained from delivering an anti-American diatribe.

But the loss was obviously grievous. Though he was listed as a disarmament "expert" on the delegation roster, Nosenko's actual function was presumably to act as the KGB's watchdog over the rest of the Soviet delegation. He certainly knew the identity of a number of Soviet espionage agents around the world, and on top of that he presumably was privy to many of the inner secrets of Soviet disarmament strategy. In fact, only a few days after his defection, the Russian delega-

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